

Closely allied with the NATO SAS program was the short-lived Jupiter missile program in the Southern Region. In November 1958, General Norstad, SACEUR, disclosed that his forces would soon possess 30 missile battalions. He expected to have 100 operational missile battalions by 1963, at which time it would be possible to eliminate up to 40 manned aircraft squadrons. Shortly after the Jupiter intermediate range ballistic missile test program was completed on 18 May 1959, the State Department authorized General Norstad to initiate formal discussions for deployment of the Jupiters in Italy and Turkey. A few months later, on 10 August 1959, the USAF signed a technical agreement with the Italian Air Force and a Jupiter technical training group was established at Luigi Bologna Seaplane Station. Then, in 1960 Hq USAFE programmed one SM-78 Strategic Missile Squadron for Cigli AB, Turkey, with five launch positions to be operational by February 1962. Both Italian and Turkish Air Force personnel were schooled in the operation of the Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles in preparation for their being turned over to these countries. The United States would maintain control of the nuclear warheads.

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No sooner had Italian and Turkish Jupiter crews become operationally capable than the Secretary of Defense ordered the missiles withdrawn. The official argument was that the Jupiters were already obsolete and that the NATO deterrent force was being modernized with the US Navy Polaris submarine missile. Mr McNamara denied reports that the Jupiters were withdrawn as a quid pro quo for a Soviet withdrawal of its missiles from Cuba. The withdrawal program, known as Project Pot Pie, was completed by USAFE on 25 June 1963. Shortly before, on 1 April 1963, the first Polaris submarine reported on patrol in the Mediterranean and the 30 Jupiter missiles in Italy were relieved of their NATO target commitments. Fifteen days later, the 15 Jupiters in Turkey were also relieved of their commitments.

The decision to withdraw the Jupiter missiles reflected the change in strategic thinking that had taken place under the Kennedy administration. Defense planners sought to develop strategic concepts which would avoid or retard the escalation of future East-West conflicts into nuclear war. These concepts included strengthening of the Air Force's capability to counter Soviet Bloc non-nuclear limited war, guerrilla war, and probing tactics with conventional arms while continuing to modernize the nation's nuclear strike capability. Mr McNamara's ideas contrasted to those of the previous Secretary of Defense, Thomas S Gates, who advocated withdrawal of all tactical fighter units from Europe and their replacement by missiles. Under the new administration, USAFE continued to meet its nuclear strike responsibilities and planned for TAC conventional augmentation forces. The TAC-USAFE agreements soon became relevant when TAC forces deployed to Europe under Operation Tack Hammer along with the mobilized Air National Guard in Operation Stairstep to support US national policy in the 1961 Berlin crisis. Although not directly affected, strike units in the Mediterranean were involved in these movements in that Tack Hammer and Stairstep units eventually replaced some TAC rotational tactical element units on duty in the area.